

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
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BY
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FIRST THINGS MUST BE PLACED FIRST. SO ON THIS OCCASION, FOR YOU BOTH FESTIVE AND SOBERING, THE FIRST EXPRESSION SHOULD BE ONE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THOSE WHO TODAY RECEIVE THEIR DEGREES, A REWARD FOR PAST EFFORT AND, LET US ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE, A SYMBOL OF FUTURE CHALLENGE. ALSO, HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PARENTS OF THE DEGREE RECIPIENTS, WHOSE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS MAY OR MAY NOT BE AT AN END. IF THEY ARE AT AN END, TODAY REPRESENTS AN ADDITIONAL SYMBOL -- OF WELCOME RELIEF FROM PAST CHALLENGE.

IT IS FOR ME A PLEASANT RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE BEEN CHOSEN AS YOUR COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER. FOR ONE WHO HAS SPENT MUCH OF THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY IN AND OUT OF THE STATE OF OHIO, WHO IS PLEASED TO BE INCLUDED AMONG THE MOST DEVOTED OF OHIO'S COUNTLESS SONS-IN-LAW, WHO HAS WANDERED IN THE SPRINGTIME ALONG THE BANKS OF THE OLENTANGY, THIS OCCASION IS QUITE NATURALLY IMMENSELY GRATIFYING. I, DEED, ONE MAY WONDER HOW MANY WASHINGTON OFFICIALS, OTHER THAN THOSE FROM THE STATE ITSELF, COULD CORRECTLY

IDENTIFY BOTH THE OLENTANGY AND THE SCIOTO. ONE HAS THAT SPECIAL AND JOYFUL SENSE OF COMING HOME.

THEREFORE I ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE, PRESIDENT ENARSON, THE AWARDING OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS -- AND AM ONLY MILDLY TROUBLED BY H.L. MENCKEN'S OBSERVATION REGARDING HONORARY DEGREES THAT "NO DECENT MAN WOULD ACCEPT A DEGREE THAT HE HADN'T EARNED."

TODAY I SHOULD LIKE TO REFLECT ON THE BROAD SWEEP OF HISTORY. SOME TRANSFORMATIONS THROUGH WHICH THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY HAS GONE, AND THE UNIQUE ROLE THAT OHIO, AND THE OHIO VALLEY, HAVE PLAYED IN THAT FLOW OF EVENTS THAT HAS DEFINED THE REPUBLIC AND THE AMERICAN STYLE. FOR ALL OF US ARE EMBEDDED IN THE WEB OF HISTORY. IF WE ARE KNOWLEDGEABLY TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE, WE MUST KNOW JUST WHERE WE STAND AND HOW WE ARRIVED THERE. IN AN A-HISTORICAL AGE, NOT TO SAY ANTI-HISTORICAL AGE, IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO FOCUS ON THIS ABIDING REALITY. FOR, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE, WE SOMETIMES APPEAR SUSPENDED BETWEEN BEING ABSORBED BY THE SENSATIONS OF THE MOMENT OR BY VAGUE, UNIVERSAL NOTIONS LIKE THE MARCH OF MANKIND OR SHEER GLOBALISM. IN THIS CONTEXT IT IS ILLUMINATING, AND ALSO A FORM OF RELIEF, TO TURN ONE'S GAZE BACK TO A MORE PRECISELY DEFINABLE REALITY.

OHIO AND THE OLD NORTHWEST TERRITORY CONSTITUTED THE FIRST FRONTIER OF THE UNITED STATES. THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE WAS THE FOUNDATION STONE IN DEVELOPING THE EDUCATIONAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR A SOCIETY BOTH FREE AND DEMOCRATIC. THE MORRILL ACT OF 1862 WAS A FURTHER EXPRESSION OF THIS SPIRIT LEADING TO THE CREATION OF THE OHIO AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE IN 1873, RENAMED THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY IN 1878. HISTORIANS HAVE LONG POINTED TO THE DOMINANT ROLE OF THE OHIO VALLEY AND THE DIFFERING ATTITUDES ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE OHIO RIVER IN SHAPING BOTH THE CHARACTER OF THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AND THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC. IN THE CENTURY AFTER THE CIVIL WAR OHIO PROVIDED A STANDARD FOR SUCCESSFUL INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A HAPPY BALANCE BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL PURSUITS THAT WAS A FAIR REFLECTION OF THE NATION AS A WHOLE. IT WAS THIS BLEND OF INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE AS WELL AS OHIO'S LATTER-DAY ROLE AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST THAT UNDERScoreD OHIO'S CONTINUING POLITICAL PROMINENCE AND ITS REASONABLE CLAIM TO BEING THE MOTHER OF PRESIDENTS.

I STRESS THESE HISTORICAL CURRENTS BECAUSE OUR RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH THE NATION'S ENERGY PROBLEMS -- SO NOTEWORTHY HERE IN OHIO THIS PAST SEVERE WINTER --

THAT THE NATION WILL ONCE AGAIN HAVE TO PASS THROUGH AN HISTORIC TRANSITION, BOTH FUNDAMENTAL AND TROUBLESOME. FOR THE OIL THAT WE, AT AN ACCELERATING PACE SINCE WORLD WAR II, HAVE USED TO FUEL OUR ECONOMY WILL SOON REACH A WORLDWIDE LIMIT ON CAPACITY AND WILL THEN BEGIN TO DISAPPEAR AS A PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF ENERGY. THE LEGACY OF OIL CREATED OVER HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF YEARS WILL INDEED BE LARGELY DISSIPATED IN LITTLE MORE THAN A CENTURY -- AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MOTOR CAR AND THE CONVERSION OF THE BRITISH FLEET FROM COAL TO OIL. IN THE COURSE OF THE NEXT DECADE WE SHALL REACH A LIMIT ON THE WORLD'S PRODUCTION CAPACITY FOR ITS PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF ENERGY, AND SOMETIME IN THE 21ST CENTURY OUR DEPENDENCE UPON FOSSIL FUELS WILL HAVE TO BE BROKEN. THE INEVITABLE QUESTION AS WE FACE SO AWESOME A TRANSITION IS -- WHAT THEN?

IN THESE RUMINATIONS QUITE NATURALLY I HAVE TURNED BACK TO THAT TYPICALLY MID-WESTERN FIGURE AMONG AMERICAN HISTORIANS, FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER, WHO SO PAINSTAKINGLY ANALYZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRONTIER IN AMERICAN HISTORY, AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING AMERICAN CHARACTER AND STYLE.

TURNER HAD BROODED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SOCIETY OF THE CLOSING OF THE FRONTIER. BUT JUST AS WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE FRONTIER IN 1890 WITH ITS PROMISE OF CHEAP AND ABUNDANT LAND, SO TODAY WE FACE THE GRADUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF WHAT HAS BEEN THE AXIOMATIC IN THE AMERICAN SOCIETY: CHEAP AND ABUNDANT ENERGY.

EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEARLY MARKED DATE SUCH AS 1890, WE MUST NONETHELESS PONDER THE CONSEQUENCES FOR AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THE CLOSING OF ANOTHER FRONTIER -- THAT OF ABUNDANTLY AVAILABLE FOSSIL FUELS. THE NOTION OF PHYSICAL LIMITS IS ONE THAT COMES HARD TO AMERICANS. IN THE PAST AMERICANS HAVE BEEN LOATHE TO RECOGNIZE ANY SAVE FOR LAND. BUT, JUST AS IN THE CASE OF LAND WE HAVE COME TO ADAPT TO PHYSICAL LIMITS THROUGH LAND USE PLANNING OR THROUGH ZONING, SO MUST WE GRADUALLY ADJUST TO A STRINGENCY IN ENERGY RESOURCE AVAILABILITY THROUGH PLANNING, BUT FIRST THROUGH ACCEPTING THE VERY NATURE OF LIMITS.

THIS IMPLIES A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN OUR PRESUPPOSITIONS. PRESIDENT CARTER HAS CALLED FOR A WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE. THE SACRIFICES THAT WE ARE OBLIGED TO MAKE ARE MORE ATTITUDINAL THAN MATERIAL. WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A CHANGE IN OUR IDEAS AND EXPECTATIONS -- AND THAT IS THE SACRIFICE MOST DIFFICULT FOR MEN TO ACCEPT. IT IMPLIES THE ABANDONMENT

OF OUR CASUAL SPENDTHRIFT WAYS REGARDING ENERGY USE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT ENERGY, A RECOGNITION OF INTERDEPENDENCE, AND NECESSARILY A NEW ETHIC OF CONSERVATION. ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL WE SHALL HAVE TO HEED THAT DIMLY RECALLED DICTUM FOR INDIVIDUAL CONDUCT: WASTE NOT, WANT NOT.

IN THE UNITED STATES WE HAVE TO A REMARKABLE DEGREE REPLACED HUMAN LABOR BY A VAST ARRAY OF MECHANICAL AIDS. YET ALL OF THIS CAPITAL EQUIPMENT, WHICH SUSTAINS OUR STANDARD OF LIVING, IS DRIVEN BY ENERGY, MOSTLY BY OIL AND GAS FOR WHICH THE PROSPECTIVE SUPPLY LIMITATIONS ARE SO STRINGENT. THE UNITED STATES CANNOT GO ON EXPANDING PLANT AND EQUIPMENT ON THE EXPECTATION THAT ADDITIONAL OIL WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO MEET OUR NEEDS. INDEED BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 1980'S WE SHALL HAVE TO FACE A PRACTICAL LIMIT WORLDWIDE ON OIL PRODUCTION.

IF WE BEGIN TO ADJUST NOW, WHILE WE STILL HAVE TIME, WE SHALL BE ABLE ADEQUATELY TO MAKE THE TRANSITION.

IF, HOWEVER, WE LACK THE APPROPRIATE FORESIGHT, LIKE THE GRASSHOPPERS IN AESOP'S FABLE, WE SHALL FACE A FAR MORE PAINFUL FUTURE -- WITH A SUDDEN INTERRUPTION IN THE FLOW OF GOODS AND SERVICES, A DECLINE IN INCOME, OUTPUT AND EMPLOYMENT -- AND FAR MORE RAPID INFLATION. THE CHALLENGE

LIES BEFORE US: CAN WE PREPARE FOR THE TRANSITION, AND MAKE USE OF THE TIME THAT IS STILL AVAILABLE?

ALL OF US -- AND PARTICULARLY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY -- HAVE AN INCALCULABLE STAKE IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR EFFORTS. TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS WE SHALL HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH OUR ENERGY PROBLEMS AS A UNITED COUNTRY -- AND TO RESIST, AS WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY DONE IN THE PAST, THE FRAGMENTATION THROUGH REGIONAL INTERESTS AND THE TENDENCY TOWARDS BALKANIZATION.

AS ALWAYS, THERE WILL BE THE COUNSELS OF TIMIDITY IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGE. THE HOPE WILL BE EXPRESSED THAT SOMETHING WILL TURN UP -- WITHOUT ANY EFFORT ON OUR PART. THERE WILL BE ALLURING VOICES ASSERTING THAT WE NEED NOT CHANGE ANYTHING. AND THERE WILL BE THE TEMPERMENTAL POLLYANNAS WHO WILL FIND COMFORT IN THE PROPOSITION THAT IF THE INABILITY TO PRODUCE MORE OIL WORLDWIDE IS INCONVENIENT, THEN, OF COURSE, THERE MUST BE MORE OIL OUT THERE.

THERE IS NOT. JUST KEEP IN MIND THAT, IF THE REST OF THE WORLD WERE CONSUMING AT CURRENT AMERICAN LEVELS OF USE, SOME 32 BARRELS OF OIL PER HEAD PER YEAR, THAT ALL OF THE OIL THAT THE GEOLOGISTS IN THEIR WILDEST DREAMS EVER EXPECTED TO EXIST IN THE EARTH'S CRUST WOULD BE EXHAUSTED

IN JUST 15 YEARS, HAPPILY OR UNHAPPILY OTHER NATIONS DO NOT CONSUME AT OUR RATE, BUT THERE IS SOME QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER THEY WOULD BE WILLING AT THEIR EXPENSE TO ACCEPT A STEADY EXPANSION OF AMERICAN USE, EVEN WERE THAT POSSIBLE -- WHEN THE UNITED STATES USES ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE WORLD'S DWINDLING SUPPLY.

THIS IS AN AWESOME CHALLENGE, YET IT IS ONE THAT LACKS A CLEAR UNEQUIVOCAL SIGNAL LIKE THAT OF PEARL HARBOR. NONETHELESS, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO DRIFT. WITH APPROPRIATE FORESIGHT WE SHALL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TIME THAT WE HAVE TO MAKE ADAPTATIONS IN THE NEAR TERM -- AND IN THE LONG TERM TO BRING FORTH NEW AND INEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCES OF ENERGY SUPPLY -- WHICH WILL GRADUALLY REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOSSIL FUELS.

IT IS INCUMBENT ON COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS TO OFFER TO THE DEPARTING GRADUATES SOME COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHY, SOME ETERNAL VERITIES -- TO GUIDE THEM ON THEIR WAY. PERHAPS IT IS THIS PERENNIAL ENDEAVOR THAT HAS EARNED FOR COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS THE REPUTATION, HOWEVER UNJUST, OF BEING -- "EMINENT BORES". IN ANY CASE I CAN OFFER YOU LITTLE IN THE WAYS OF ETERNAL VERITIES. THERE ARE SOME GENERAL PRECEPTS: THE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE CHANGE, THE NEED FOR FORESIGHT AND FOR FLEXIBILITY, THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE, INCLUDING SELF DISCIPLINE.

YET, IN ADDITION, WE KNOW THESE THINGS. WE FACE A SEVERE CHALLENGE -- A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TEST FOR A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, WHICH IS SO LIKELY TO RESPOND WITH TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE. IN THE 1930'S THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER STANLEY BALDWIN OBSERVED "THE TROUBLE WITH DEMOCRACY IS THAT IT WILL NOT RECOGNIZE THE TRUTH -- UNTIL IT IS RIGHT UP AGAINST IT." THAT IS THE CHALLENGE -- PRESENTED BY AN INVISIBLE CRISIS. FOR YOU THERE MAY BE LESS EASE AND FAR MORE CHALLENGE THAN FOR YOUR PARENTS IN THE LONG PERIOD OF PAX AMERICANA FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II. IF YOU APPROACH IT WITH AN APPRECIATION OF FINITE LIMITS, WITH A SENSE OF THE PAST -- AND OF PAST VALUES AS THEY BEAR UPON THE FUTURE, AND ARE ABLE TO PRODUCE IN YOUR GENERATION INDIVIDUALS OF QUALITY, COURAGE, FORESIGHT, AND IMAGINATION -- THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO OVERCOME ANY CHALLENGE.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON GAVE SUCCINCT ADVICE TO ANY SPEAKER: "DON'T QUOTE LATIN, SAY WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY, AND SIT DOWN." IT IS EXCELLENT ADVICE -- EVEN, DESPITE THIS ACADEMIC SETTING, AVOIDING THE USE OF LATIN. YET, ON THIS HAPPY OCCASION LET ME ONCE AGAIN OFFER HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DEGREE RECIPIENTS -- FOR WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED AND FOR THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU WILL FACE IN THE FUTURE.

GOOD LUCK AND GOD SPEED!